United Nations E/2001/66

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 May 2001

Original: English

Substantive session of 2001
Geneva, 2-27 July 2001
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council

Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system for development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 53/192. It is complemented by the report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the multi-year funding frameworks and the evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (A/56/70-E/2001/58) and by an addendum to that report containing comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for 1999 (A/56/70/Add.1-E/2001/58/Add.1).

* E/2001/100.

01-37253 (E) 250601

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1	3
II.	The changing context and challenges	2–10	3
III.	Impact evaluation of operational activities: capacity-building and poverty eradication	11–22	6
IV.	Oversight role of the Council	23–31	9
V.	Resources and funding	32–43	10
VI.	Strategic frameworks and programming	44–65	12
VII.	Field-level coordination	66–136	16
	A. Strengthening the resident coordinator system	66–74	16
	B. Simplification and harmonization	75–97	19
	C. Common premises and sharing of administrative services	98–106	23
	D. Specialized agencies	107–110	27
	E. Field structure	111–112	28
	F. Cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund	113–119	28
	G. Cooperation with regional development banks	120–127	29
	H. Monitoring and evaluation	128–136	30
VIII.	Evolving dimensions of operational activities	137–184	32
	A. Humanitarian assistance, peace-building and development	137–146	32
	B. Human rights, including the right to development	147–153	33
	C. Information and communication technologies	154–162	34
	D. Gender in development	163–172	36
	E. Regional dimensions	173–181	38
	F. Technical and economic cooperation among developing countries	182–184	40
IX.	Concluding observations	185–188	40

Tables

1.	Status of harmonization of programming cycles, as of March 2001	20
2.	Importance of improvements in the opinion of the resident coordinator system	23
3.	Establishment of common premises/United Nations houses, 1996-2000	24
4.	Percentage of common or shared main administrative services achieved by United Nations country teams	25
5.	Time-frames established by United Nations country teams to achieve full common administrative services	26

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared for consideration by the Economic and Social Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/192. It contains an assessment of the implementation of that resolution. Following the Council's consideration, the report will be finalized and the recommendations of the Secretary-General will be added for submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session for the triennial comprehensive policy review. In finalizing the report to the Assembly, the Secretary-General will greatly benefit from the views expressed by the members of the Council, particularly in formulating his recommendations. The report is mainly based on replies to questionnaires received from 24 programme countries, 12 donor Governments, 24 United Nations system organizations, 110 resident coordinators and 22 programme/project managers. It also draws upon impact evaluation missions on capacity-building and poverty eradication in six countries and an external evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. While reviewing the issues germane to the resolution, the report attempts to take a forward-looking approach, bearing in mind the changing context and challenges that lie ahead for United Nations system operational activities.

II. The changing context and challenges

2. The United Nations system continues to be viewed by many countries as a valued and indispensable partner and as a source of neutral and objective assistance and advice. But it has to strive to retain that confidence and to optimize its comparative advantages. The challenges facing United Nations development cooperation arise from the changing environment and context in which it has to operate. In particular:

(a) Globalization, driven by the forces of economic and financial integration and by the pervasive impact of information and communication technologies, is fundamentally changing the context and dynamics of development, offering new opportunities and posing new challenges;

(b) Global economic integration is shrinking the world but a global sense of solidarity and shared destiny that it should engender has yet to take hold between the rich and the poor. Economies are becoming more and more interlinked, yet prosperity remains a privilege for the few;

(c) Robust global economic growth over the past years has been accompanied by a significant increase in income inequalities within and among rich and poor countries. The number of people living in poverty continues to grow despite the fact that the means to eradicate poverty in a short time-frame are within easy grasp in the world at large;

(d) The fiscal health of most major industrial nations has improved, but overall official development assistance (ODA) and multilateral development cooperation have been either stagnant or on decline;

(e) The framework and content of the development agenda have been enlarged and deepened; yet uneven and inadequate economic growth in the poorest countries remains a major obstacle to the attainment of this broader agenda. The

primacy of people and participatory development have been emphasized, but their implementation through aid policies and performance is only slowly making progress;

(f) It is increasingly recognized that global problems cannot be solved only at the global level and national problems cannot be addressed successfully solely at the local level. A global-national interdependence has emerged. While support for national development remains central, the emergence of global concerns and a global context and approach has expanded the ambit of development cooperation and made its mission more complex and daunting, with shrinking resources even more difficult to attain. Sustainable development, sustained growth and poverty eradication have emerged as the intertwined purposes of development cooperation. At the same time, with increasing emphasis being placed on results and effectiveness of development cooperation, there is a growing demand for measurement of and monitoring these results on a global scale;

(g) Along with human rights, the right to development is now widely accepted and a right-based approach to development is broadly pursued. The United Nations system is now being encouraged[1] to provide support to national efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization, once viewed as strictly a national endeavour;

(h) The concept of security is now seen to embrace economic and human dimensions. Human development is acknowledged to encompass economic growth, democratic governance and social equity;

(i) The way economic reform and structural adjustment is viewed has also evolved by articulating the concept of adjustment with a wider consideration of social dimensions;

(j) An expanding global agenda is coinciding — and sometimes colliding — with a growing but specific national agenda. While the United Nations development agenda has grown and widened, so have the needs and demands of developing countries. They are diverse but specific, generic but specialized. The intersection of a broadening global agenda and a diversified but specific country demands compounds the complexity of United Nations development cooperation;

(k) Just as areas and sectors intersect and boundaries among these are blurred, so is the traditional differentiation between normative work, policy advice and technical assistance. More and more, United Nations development cooperation is becoming "upstream", involving advocacy and policy dialogue under the leadership of Governments and engaging civil society and other external partners.

3. As a variety of channels and instruments for development cooperation is being used to a greater extent than in the past, the United Nations now has to operate in a more intensely competitive environment, with reduced real resources and with new partners and contribute to the achievement of time-bound targets.

Globalization

4. The United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) recognized globalization as "the central challenge we face today". A major task — and opportunity — for development cooperation will be to ensure that the adverse effects of globalization are remedied and its benefits are more equitably

distributed. Many Governments are engaged in formulating appropriate public policies — economic and social — to cope with the dynamics of globalization in the specific national context. The United Nations system operational activities can help by disseminating the experiences of other countries and through its advisory and upstream work in supporting appropriate policies.

Liberalization

5. Economic liberalization in developing countries has impacted on their external economic cooperation, injecting new development needs. Trade liberalization in the context of meeting World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments is a major concern of Governments of these countries. While most recognize the potential benefits of a liberalized trade regime, they want to open their economies according to the context and condition of their societies and to determine the pace and manner of doing so. Most developing countries feel that their economies do not have the flexibility and adaptability to meet all the requirements of the international trade regime. There is growing concern that too rapid and across-the-board liberalization might destabilize their still fragile economies and disrupt economic growth. Countries are requesting the United Nations system's help and advice in such areas as policy and structural change and institutional infrastructure-building. The demand and need for trade-related technical assistance and advice for capacity-building has increased and must be met.

New partners

6. While Governments remain indispensable to the delivery and success of United Nations development cooperation, the role of Governments in economic management is changing. Accordingly and in line with the evolving role of Governments and within their structure, the United Nations, in line with its broader agenda, is interacting with a broader range of constituencies than before, including autonomous governmental entities. National execution has brought United Nations development work closer to line ministries, as well as non-governmental organizations, as executing or implementing agencies.

7. In many countries, attempts are being made towards political and economic decentralization, opening up new partnership opportunities to the United Nations system. Provincial and local authorities are aspiring to be direct partners with international organizations. New and innovative patterns of partnership — financial and managerial — between the United Nations, federal government, local government, NGOs and the people are being forged. The United Nations is assisting countries in democratic decentralization. Nearly 95 per cent of resident coordinators have identified decentralized development and participatory development as one of the emerging areas of United Nations assistance.

8. The intended beneficiary of that assistance should also be an integral partner in development cooperation, not only in its implementation but even more in its design and formulation. To avoid the pitfalls of patronage and pilferage and as a way of empowerment, the active participation of civil society in United Nations development cooperation has become more and more important. These non-state actors include the private sector, NGOs, community-based organizations and the scientific and technological communities. There are many examples of initiatives, such as the global compact and other efforts, that establish alliances with non-

governmental partners. As the reach and scope of United Nations partnership expand, the challenge, rigour, transparency and accountability standards should not be compromised.

Millennium Summit

9. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, together with global conferences, has defined a new context, setting new milestones and time-bound targets, such as the targets to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty by half by the year 2015 and to achieve universal primary education by the same date. The General Assembly has called upon the organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen and adapt their strategies and activities to take into account the follow-up to the Declaration and requested the Secretary-General to ensure system-wide coordination of its implementation.

10. While the primary responsibility for the follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration is that of Member States and of the international community, it constitutes the principal mandate and challenge to the United Nations development system to assist member Governments and add value to national efforts for the realization of these goals. This imparts a greater sense of immediacy and import to the goals of major United Nations conferences and it places a greater responsibility on the United Nations development system to play its part to fulfil its potential as a key instrument for international development cooperation.

III. Impact evaluation of operational activities: capacity-building and poverty eradication

11. Impact evaluations were carried out in response to paragraph 53 of General Assembly resolution 53/192. They followed a pilot series of evaluations, which were an input to the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review. They analysed the overall performance of the United Nations development system and were designed to provide inputs to guidance for operational activities of the United Nations system. This second series focused on capacity-building and poverty eradication in six countries.

12. For the purposes of the exercise, capacity-building was understood to involve building up the capabilities, knowledge and security of individuals, strengthening or creating organizations and creating or modifying the environment within which the organizations would operate. Poverty eradication was considered as a process of eliciting positive changes in the capabilities of individuals in terms of access to knowledge, services and assets, and incomes. Both capacity-building and poverty eradication are linked closely to the general thrust of the country's development policies. It is, therefore, not surprising that much of United Nations system support to capacity-building was found to be related to poverty eradication. The detailed information on the results of impact evaluations, including reports of all missions, will be provided to the General Assembly within the framework of the review.

13. Meanwhile, some broad conclusions have emerged. First, with the right policy mix and institutional capacity and with adequate international assistance, poverty can be significantly and rapidly reduced and the United Nations system can play an important role in that process. United Nations system support to capacity-building

has been an important part of that role. Second, there is a shortage of resources, both national and external, available for poverty reduction. The gains to be made nationally, regionally and globally from an increase of resources devoted to genuine poverty reduction should therefore be considerable. Third, there is a close relationship between capacity-building and national ownership, both at the conceptual and implementation stages. In this regard, appropriate involvement of national organizations, local beneficiaries and Governments is highly desirable.

14. One essential message is that, given the right environment, the United Nations system can assist recipient countries to successfully address key problems which have emerged at the core of global concerns, such as poverty eradication.

15. Thus, for example, in one case study a country has been clearly successful in reducing poverty and the United Nations system has made a significant contribution to that reduction. The key factors in that outcome have been the following: the Government exercised strong political leadership and the interaction with the United Nations system throughout the period worked well. The United Nations system was involved in a central transformation of the society. It had an input both to the policy and to the implementation process. The United Nations country team contained or mobilized appropriate skills and also benefited from strong leadership during a key period early on. This was capacity-building in the best and broadest sense.

16. In other cases, there are also clear instances of impact and achievements in creating or strengthening capacity that have been furthered through the United Nations system operational activities. However, they were less certain, less comprehensive and more vulnerable to events and a lack of resources. These limits to success appear to be due to a combination of internal constraints and external factors. But all evaluations note the decline in resources and the restriction it places on effectiveness. There has to be a minimum of resources available within the society, though not necessarily provided via the United Nations system, for poverty eradication and capacity-building to succeed.

17. The United Nations system has helped to broaden the concept of capacity-building from human resource development to cover institution-building and organizational development. Recent General Assembly legislation prompted issuance of system-wide guidelines on capacity-building. Yet evaluations suggest that capacity-building is still seen as being the reserve of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The principle that it is central to operational activities has yet to be fully operationalized by the system.

18. Likewise, the understanding of the concept of poverty eradication has also evolved. The International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNDP have all contributed to this evolution from a simple concept of income poverty to one that includes access to resources and services, particularly social services, capabilities, rights and inclusion. The poverty goals adopted by the Millennium Summit reflect this evolution. This approach is more operational and helps the international community and recipient countries address the issue in a more practical and comprehensive way, one that responds to the needs of countries, communities and individuals.

19. However, the evaluation studies found that the central concept of poverty eradication and the work of the individual entities of the United Nations development system could be more systematically linked. There is still some way to

go in harmonizing particular sectoral preoccupations and the central concern of Member States for the reduction and eradication of poverty. It is not clear whether there is a consensus within the United Nations development system on how to eradicate poverty in the country concerned. Nor is it always clear that all the relevant disciplines are being brought to bear on this effort.

20. On a number of other issues, the evaluation studies have highlighted some gaps between concepts and practice or show that progress towards defined goals has been slow. Despite the emphasis on country ownership, in many cases operational activities are still seen as externally driven and ownership is closely related to impact in capacity-building. Programmes and projects should be prepared with greater attention to how their content would contribute to an overall national strategy. Benchmarks and indicators of progress and achievement are often neglected, and the output of entire monitoring and evaluation systems does not yet include feedback to concept, solution and operations.

21. The inadequate institutional memory about past United Nations efforts and the consequent inability to learn lessons from experience remain a problem: current monitoring and evaluation practices may assure adequate accountability but do not assure an appropriate degree of lesson learning. The studies have also raised the question of whether, given the importance of poverty eradication, the United Nations system has the appropriate quality and mix of capacities available at the field level to address the broad range of issues with the required skills and expertise.

22. The studies found that advances have been made in the development of design, monitoring and evaluation tools. Some of these tools are well adapted to projects that have clear narrowly defined objectives and clear foreseeable implementation paths. However, these tools are less helpful where the precise course to be followed in implementation is not clearly known at the outset and where the objectives are necessarily imprecise and evolving, as is often the case with capacity-building. Creation and development of institutions are continuous processes and do not normally have discreet time-frames with clearly defined beginnings and ends. If an organization is being created or strengthened, it is not always practical or cost-effective to determine at what instant it becomes self-sufficient. Furthermore, any such organization is part of the socio-economic system, which is also evolving and will continue to do so with or without the intervention. The purpose of the intervention is to change the nature and performance of one or more or all components of the system. As such, it is the performance of the system over time that should be the focus of the monitoring and evaluation. The United Nations Millennium Declaration provides important benchmarks for systemic monitoring and evaluation. However, work remains to be done, for example, in translating the goals of the Declaration into targets to be used at the agency, country or regional levels. For instance, there is a matrix of indicators to be used by United Nations country teams in preparing their common country assessments. This provides helpful quantifiable targets. However, one lesson of these evaluations is that much that is necessary is not readily quantified, even if it can be observed and recorded by skilled, qualified observers. The challenge in evaluating the overall impact of operational activities is to use a judicious mix of quantitative and qualitative assessment to obtain a better understanding of the progress achieved.

IV. Oversight role of the Council

23. Pivotal to the reform and renaissance of United Nations development cooperation is the strengthening of intergovernmental oversight, particularly of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. United Nations development cooperation is financed by Member States and it is meant to add value and contribute to development in Member States. Governments determine policy through the General Assembly, provide coordinated oversight through the Council and manage the funds and programmes through executive boards. The interrelationship between these three intergovernmental bodies is defined in General Assembly resolution 48/162, which provided the legislative framework within which they discharge their respective responsibilities.

24. Over the past few years, this three-tier intergovernmental structure of oversight of United Nations operational activities has evolved in a way that the General Assembly has performed its policy functions in the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review. The executive boards provide intergovernmental support to and supervision of the activities of the funds and programmes. Among other things, their functions include implementing the policies of the Assembly and the coordinated guidance of the Council and recommending new initiatives to the Council and through the Council to the Assembly, as necessary. Executive heads and boards are taking important decisions to optimize scarce resources to streamline and shift their programme coverage and on the focus and the nature of country interventions.

25. From the start, the role of the Council has been less clearly defined and carried out. More recently, however, the Council has provided clearer guidance by taking decisions on important cross-cutting issues, such as capacity-building, gender and poverty eradication. The Council also brings into play, under its aegis, policy makers from Governments, the executive heads, country teams and the agencies of the United Nations system with a view to enhancing the overall coordination and impact of operational activities of the system.

Annual reports to the Council of the heads of the United Nations funds and programmes

26. In paragraphs 1 and 2 of its resolution 1998/27, the Council called on the executive boards to ensure that the heads of these funds and programmes include in their annual reports to the Economic and Social Council a thorough analysis of problems encountered and lessons learned so as to allow the Council to fulfil its coordinating role, and when considering the annual reports to identify specific problems, opportunities and areas in which the Council could provide cross-sectoral coordination and overall guidance on a system-wide basis and to make appropriate proposals.

27. Detailed information on the results of considerations of the annual reports of the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes can be found in the relevant reports of the executive boards.

Concise consolidated list of issues

28. In its resolution 50/227, the General Assembly indicated that the guidance functions of the Council should be reinforced by giving attention to the objectives,

priorities and strategies in the implementation of the policies formulated by the General Assembly, as well as concentrating on cross-cutting and coordination issues. In its resolution 1998/27, the Council invited the Secretary-General to arrange for submission to the Council by the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes, in consultation with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), of a concise consolidated list of issues, which are central to the improved coordination of operational activities and on which the funds and programmes seek consideration by and guidance from the Council. The requested consolidated list of issues is provided in a conference room paper, while the issues relevant to resources and funding are contained in the relevant part of this report.

Joint and concurrent meetings of the executive boards

29. The Council, in paragraph 29 of its resolution 1999/6, recommended that the practice of holding joint meetings of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council and the bureaux of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme (WFP) be continued, and requested the respective bureaux to report on the meetings to their governing bodies.

30. The main topic of the 2001 Joint Executive Board meeting of UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA was on progress with the use of common country assessment indicator frameworks and a presentation by the United Nations country team and Vice-Chairman of the national planning commission from Nepal, focused on the common country assessment and UNDAF experience in that country.

31. In that session of the Joint Executive Board, it was agreed that the common country assessment indicator frameworks needed to evolve to respond to new priorities in national plans, conference reviews and the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and that continued international financial assistance and technical expertise were required. Developing new indicators should build on best practices from previous experiences, and should take advantage of greater country and regional participation.

V. Resources and funding

32. The three essentials for effective development cooperation are sufficient, secure and stable financing; a dynamic institutional structure; and appropriate means of design and delivery. The reform process initiated in recent years by Governments and the Secretary-General touches on all three, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

33. Assured and adequate availability of financial resources is a prerequisite to meeting current and further challenges facing the United Nations system. A weak, unstable and uncertain financial base hampers the capacity of the system's development cooperation to meet these challenges. Financing operational activities has long been on the intergovernmental agenda and a major preoccupation in the previous triennial reviews. An implied impetus behind the reform of United Nations development cooperation was that it would lead to more stable and substantial flows of funding by increased development resources. But the trends thus far have not been encouraging.

34. ODA itself is declining, reaching an all-time low of 0.22 per cent of gross national product (GNP) in year 1997. It rose slightly to 0.24 per cent in 1999. International aid flows declined through the 1990s, before stabilizing slightly in the last two years of the decade. Per capita aid to Africa, for example, has tumbled from US$ 43 to $30 since the early 1980s, slicing by half in real terms. Wide disparities within traditional donors are becoming an aid impediment. While some have exceeded the target of 0.7 per cent GNP, others are lagging far behind, one at barely 0.1 per cent.

35. The share of multilateral organizations has thus far, in broad terms, kept pace with the overall reduction in ODA, usually at about 30 per cent of total ODA. Not only is aid in real terms declining or stagnating but its impact and effectiveness are also under closer scrutiny than before. One postulate is that aid is effective only in the context and in conjunction with good governance and quality economic management. Others fear that that could lead to selectivity and lends itself to subjective and extraneous considerations. Generally, however, there is far greater awareness than before that aid effectiveness and impact cannot be separated from aid availability. Despite increasing evidence that development funding is a good investment -- politically and economically — the constituency for multilateral aid in important industrial societies does not appear to be strong or vocal enough to help reverse the decline.

36. Funding for operational activities, particularly regular or core, remains far short of the critical mass necessary for efficiency and effectiveness of programme delivery. The operations of funds and programmes in many countries are at levels far below those approved by their executive boards. Core funds and regular resources are indispensable to discharge the approved development programme. The growing asymmetry between resources that are reliable and stable and those that are transient and exigent is not only distorting the programme priorities of United Nations development cooperation but also making efficient management of the programmes much more difficult. Lack of resources affects impact, leading to further cutbacks and eroding public and political support. This vicious cycle has to be broken by increasing core funding.

37. There is also a growing trend towards support to short-term emergency type of activities to the detriment of long-term development. Contributions to WFP illustrate this problem. Some two thirds of its resources are devoted to humanitarian assistance and only one third to longer-term development, reversing the proportion of some years ago. Some donors have informed WFP that they may have to further reduce their contributions to its development activities. While bridges are being built between short-term and long-term dimensions of development cooperation, donor preferences and accountability are important. They determine the disposition of such funding.

38. Aid channelled through the United Nations development system is still overwhelmingly dependent on a few developed countries. Efforts to broaden the donor base of United Nations voluntary funding to arrive at a more equitable burden-sharing of funding have not yet yielded significant results.

39. Over the past few years, the pattern of voluntary contributions has been the subject of considerable scrutiny. The voluntary character of funding has been based on a simple faith and premise: that development aid has a moral underpinning; that it will always have a strong enlightened political constituency; and that the

flexibility of choosing how much to contribute will be linked to performance and lead to more not less aid.

40. The progress towards multi-year frameworks for funding operational activities had raised the expectations of reversing the declining trend in core resources, which has yet to be realized. While more time is needed for an informed assessment, the mode and momentum of multi-year contributions have to be sustained and strengthened to achieve the desired goal of a substantial increase and predictability of funding. It is a major step forward as a strategic planning device but its financial dividend remains uncertain (see A/56/70-E/2001/58).

41. What are in question are the United Nations country-level presence and programming and the ability to respond to individual country needs. As a consequence, not only its development work but also its advocacy profile in the field, relating to disadvantaged sectors, such as children and women, and life-saving activities such as vaccinations, support to local initiatives in child and maternal health, primary and pre-school education, clean water and sanitation, are in danger of a serious decline. Critical programmes and activities are drastically scaled down or put on indefinite hold in many countries in Africa and in other least developed countries. The trust and confidence of Governments and civil society in the United Nations ability to sustain its development programming are also at risk.

42. The fundamental policy — and political — question is this: is the combination of the growing role of other institutions and channels in development cooperation and diminishing United Nations funding an uncoordinated, if not unintended, coincidence inherent in the way Governments operate, or is it a conscious collective political choice of donor countries? In the words of the Secretary-General, must the United Nations confine itself to encouraging and coordinating studies on the theory of development?[2] Should the United Nations development role be confined to global consciousness-raising and advocacy and normative and standard-setting? Would even such a role be sustainable without the capital of confidence and trust that the United Nations has been able to build up over the decades, as a neutral and reliable source of assistance and advice to so many countries in their various stages of development?

43. Greater clarity and commitment are essential not only to place United Nations development cooperation on a sounder and more stable footing but also for the efficient pursuit of the global development agenda. These questions have to be addressed at a high political level to overcome the perceptions and pitfalls that have prevented progress. One such forum is the forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development, which will discuss the complex issues germane to financing development. A substantive policy discussion in the setting of the present review could provide a basis and points of reference for the Conference.

VI. Strategic frameworks and programming

44. The General Assembly has repeatedly called for greater coherence in development operations of the United Nations system. To this end, the main instruments are UNDAF and the common country assessment. The strategic framework and the Consolidated Appeal Process are used for special situations. Other instruments, originated by the Bretton Woods institutions, are the

comprehensive development framework and the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP).

45. In response to a request by the General Assembly, an evaluation of UNDAF has been conducted (A/56/70-E/2001/58). Major findings are summarized here, looking at UNDAF as a means of promoting coherent programming, producing benefits to recipient countries, and contributing to the coherence and effectiveness of the system's operations. That also required assessing the common country assessment and linkages with the comprehensive development framework, PRSPs and sector-wide approaches.

46. UNDAF has been completed in 28 countries, is in progress in 31 others and is planned in 29 other countries. The introduction of the common country assessment has rapidly progressed over the last two years, as a necessary precondition to UNDAF. The common country assessment has been completed in 76 countries, is under preparation in 38 other countries and is planned in eight countries.

Impact on recipient countries

47. UNDAF provides recipient countries with a greater understanding of the system's role in development, reviewing the system's approach to cooperation and identifying priority areas for action. It generates opportunities to address sensitive issues (human rights, internally displaced persons and alternative development strategies) if based on a forthright dialogue with national interlocutors. It can enhance integration of system programmes with national strategies since it is based on national priorities. The common country assessment and UNDAF have enhanced, in specific countries, coordination among national stakeholders, when a government is fully involved from the outset.

48. The common country assessment provides a background reference to Government, system organizations and other stakeholders, and can be a powerful tool for policy dialogue, enhancing country-level monitoring of international goals and contributing to information-sharing. It opens the way to capacity-building to develop competencies in statistical areas, identifying data gaps and constraints that require support for national statistical systems.[3] The common country assessment and UNDAF may play an important role in assisting developing countries in the follow-up and implementation of major United Nations conferences.

49. The evaluation shows that there is not enough factual evidence that UNDAF provides an input to national policy formulation through better development planning and policy design or effective policy or donor coordination, nor is it always synchronized with national planning.

50. A thorough national participation from the outset is essential to ensure a positive impact on recipient countries, but so far results are mixed. Sometimes the Government is fully engaged, but in other cases participation is limited to a formal consent or to comments on finished products. This is even more so for civil society organizations. When national involvement is limited, the capacity-building impact of the common country assessment is hardly evident. It is necessary to move forward in making use of these instruments, broadening their consistency both at the national level, within the host country, and with the donor community.

51. A major concern is the increase in "transaction costs" for both the countries and the system organizations that are associated to the preparation and monitoring of

the common country assessment and UNDAF. Both processes require the commitment of considerable resources, additional workload and skills.

Impact on the United Nations system

52. UNDAF has produced substantial results in identifying common strategic priorities and established a framework for country programmes. The common country assessment and UNDAF have contributed to develop a "system culture", as an important team-building mechanism, reinforcing the collective identity of the country teams through information-sharing and joint partnership in designing a cooperation strategy. Decentralization and delegation of authority by most organizations have facilitated these effects. More intensive teamwork is seen in strategic programming around cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issues and system-wide concurrence, with respect to conference follow-up. The common country assessments have proved to be helpful in preparing UNDAFs, identifying common strategic directions. Some country representatives recognize that their respective agency headquarters or regional sub-structures are not fully supportive of UNDAF, although the common country assessment and UNDAF have induced an increased participation of specialized agencies in coordinated analysis and strategic planning.

53. The common country assessment (especially the indicator framework) and UNDAF provide some support to the coordinated country-level conference follow-up, focusing on cross-cutting issues and challenges that the conference will have identified. The establishment of an indicator database for national priorities and conference follow-up is a major result of the common country assessment.

54. System participation in both processes has reached significant levels but is uneven. There are concerns regarding the limited involvement of United Nations entities or agencies, including regional commissions, that are not directly represented in the country. The new information technologies offer new opportunities to improve system efficiency and connectivity, enhancing cooperation in all directions between headquarters and field level. The involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions in the common country assessment and UNDAF, which is very effective in some cases, is not uniform in all countries.

55. A quality assessment of the common country assessment and UNDAF does not lead to uniform conclusions. Technical quality is improving but is uneven. Documents are often vague, lack specificity and do not specify targets, expected result and timelines for selected priority areas, or lack built-in monitoring. Some documents lack focus, are not founded on adequate database, omit key development factors and do not cover all relevant sectors. The knowledge required to produce good common country assessments and UNDAFs may call for an improvement of the skill profile of the country teams or for a fuller use of the United Nations system's diversity of mandates and perspectives.

CCA/UNDAF and country programming

56. Since the UNDAF process has only been in effect over the last four years and, in a number of countries, has only recently been completed, evidence of its impact on individual country programmes is still modest. Its influence on agency programming has so far produced mixed results. Small technical agencies do not recognize such an influence, but most system organizations (in particular, United

Nations funds and programmes and large specialized agencies) are taking measures to incorporate UNDAF in their agency country programming.

57. UNDAF has created favourable conditions for joint programming, without altering the institutional separation among country programmes. Efforts are multiplied to promote joint initiatives, programmes, mid-term reviews, evaluation efforts and services.

58. The common country assessment and UNDAF were expected to lower transactional costs through a "replacement effect", reducing procedural requirements for individual country programming. Some progress has been attained by funds and programmes, but preparations for country programmes still have separate requirements. Individual organizations and UNDG confirm that this area requires the highest priority. Concrete progress is being achieved in this area by the funds and programmes. Currently, UNDG is promoting initiatives to streamline the programme approval processes (see A/56/70-E/2001/58). Nevertheless, there is no systematic evidence that the expected replacement is taking place at system-wide level in all organizations.

Resources and technical support for CCA and UNDAF

59. Considerable technical support and resources were provided, in particular, through UNDG, to facilitate the introduction of UNDAF and the extended implementation of the common country assessment, including training initiatives. The external evaluation suggests that funding of the common country assessment and UNDAF should be further augmented and that the principle of cost-sharing should involve all participating organizations. There is no uniform position in the system about the need for additional support to the common country assessment and UNDAF, since the resource constraint seems to be felt mostly by organizations that have difficulty in ensuring participation in the two processes.

60. There is some evidence of an uneven level of technical capacities in the country teams to support the common country assessment and UNDAF, calling for an improvement of the technical profile of the country teams. New skills not available within the country team may still be available within the system. The combined presence and support of all funds, programmes and specialized agencies suggest that the system has sufficient competence to address the requirements for an overall vision of development priorities and their various sector-wide dimensions. The problem is then how to ensure the provision of that expertise when it is not available within the country team. Again, the wider use of new information technologies may be useful.

Relations with other frameworks

61. The relations of UNDAF and the common country assessment with other frameworks require some attention either for their possible complementarity or for the risk of duplication. There is evidence of reciprocal participation of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, on the one hand, and the Bretton Woods institutions, on the other, in UNDAF and the common country assessment, as well as the comprehensive development framework, PRSPs and sector-wide approaches. There is the need for rationalizing these processes and ensuring better sequencing. Work is in progress to facilitate the integration of

UNDAF and the common country assessment with the comprehensive development framework and PRSPs through a joint learning group.

62. The comprehensive development framework principles are compatible with the concepts and guiding principles adopted for UNDAF and the common country assessment. But their coverage may be different. The comprehensive development framework is more of an approach and a process, not a strategy for analysis and implementation. The common country assessment is an analytical tool, which could feed into the comprehensive development framework where it exists, while UNDAF is the "business plan" of the United Nations system.

63. More attention has recently been given to the involvement of the system in the PRSP process. Since the United Nations system is already operating in several countries with initiatives that aim at poverty reduction, its interaction with PRSPs is of special relevance. There are concrete examples of close collaboration of the United Nations system in the PRSP process. Since the PRSP process has been introduced only recently, its relations with UNDAF and the common country assessment are still at an initial stage.

64. UNDAF provides the basis for articulating a more coherent and unified United Nations system response to sector investment programmes and sector-wide approaches adopted by Governments. Sector-wide approaches are a vehicle for a broader application of the programme approach. The potential contribution of the common country assessment as an input to the preparation of sector-wide approaches has been underlined. Some reflection is required on the implications of the common country assessment and UNDAF for sector-specific work. The challenge of sector-wide approaches is how to address cross-cutting issues. The common country assessment and UNDAF provide a framework to establish these cross-sectoral linkages.

65. Both the common country assessment and UNDAF have focused on processes to reach synergy in the programming of system activities at the country level. In order to increase effectiveness and relevance of these processes, more attention should be given in the future to possible ways to integrate system activities in the national programmes according to the principles of the programme approach. UNDAF provides the basis to achieve this integration, provided that its constituency and coverage are solidly established in a thorough dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, both national and international. As repeatedly called for in General Assembly resolutions, this integration of United Nations system programmes into the national planning processes remains the final objective towards which all these strategic frameworks should aim.

VII. Field-level coordination

A. Strengthening the resident coordinator system

66. The Secretary-General's reform process, launched in 1997, was aimed at, inter alia, strengthening the resident coordinator system in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120. In resolution 53/192, the General Assembly called on the United Nations system to take further steps to strengthen the system to support Governments, where requested, in coordinating external

assistance in the pursuit of development goals. In the three years under review, all provisions of resolution 53/192 were operationalized and some progress has been achieved on various fronts, including an improved resident coordinator selection process; a revised performance appraisal mechanism; better communication with and support to the field offices; and improved coordination of the country team at the field level. According to a questionnaire for the triennial comprehensive policy review, 47 of the 107 resident coordinators who responded rated the results of the reform initiatives in strengthening the system as extensive, while 59 per cent concluded that, to some extent, positive results have been achieved. Only one resident coordinator observed very little result.

The resident coordinator function

67. To widen the pool of prospective resident coordinators and strengthen the ownership of the resident coordinator function by all United Nations system organizations, further steps were taken through the Inter-agency Advisory Panel (IAAP). The competency assessment centre was engaged to assess the competency of resident coordinator candidates against the resident coordinator job description to ensure that qualified candidates with the right skill profile be kept on a roster. When a resident coordinator post becomes vacant, IAAP presents its recommendation to the UNDP Administrator.[4] One hundred and forty-four candidates have been sponsored by ACC member organizations and assessed since the competency assessment centre started operation in October 1998. It was agreed that by 2002, all new and sitting resident coordinators will have completed the assessment. These mechanisms stress the collective action to achieve broad ownership of the resident coordinator system by the entire United Nations system.

68. In encouraging non-UNDP staff to take up the challenge of resident coordinator positions, IAAP also sought to improve the gender balance of potential resident coordinator candidates by proposing special measures to recruit women candidates for resident coordinator posts (adopted by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) in June 2000). All ACC members agreed that greater efforts should be made to identify internal candidates with good potential, including those at the P-4 level, and in the meantime external candidates should also be considered.

69. To date, 23 sitting resident coordinators are from United Nations agencies other than UNDP and 29 are women, including three designates.[5] An evaluation of the competency assessment centre shows that all organizations involved, except one, consider the new selection mechanism, including competency assessment, to be an improvement over the earlier procedures and much more satisfactory from an inter-agency point of view.

70. The performance appraisal system is another aspect that has been improved. A new performance appraisal system of resident coordinators, based on acquired experience with the previous systems, is being established, including the appraisal of resident coordinators by the executive heads of the ACC member organizations; the 180-degree feedback[6] exercise, which is at the pilot phase in 10 countries; and the institutionalized self-appraisal of the United Nations country teams in the annual resident coordinators' reports. The preparation of the annual report is used as an opportunity for the resident coordinator and the country team to self-assess their performance against the annual work plan.

Country teams

71. Field-level coordination and a participatory approach in the functioning of the resident coordinator system have always been stressed as the means to focus limited resources on priority areas and to avoid duplication. In resolution 53/192, the General Assembly once again reiterated the point and encouraged, inter alia, greater use of thematic groups.

72. Over the last three years, there has been an increase in the number of theme groups, ranging over a variety of issues. The most prominent themes observed include human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), gender, poverty alleviation, education, and health and nutrition. The theme groups facilitate better dialogue and interaction of the country team and, in some cases, with national partners through policy dialogue. Good practices in this aspect are abundant. However, it is also noted by some resident coordinators' reports that the theme groups create additional workload and tax the country team's resources/capacity, so that the meetings of the theme groups are often merely sharing of information. This is confirmed by the common country assessment/UNDAF evaluation, which recommends vigorous trimming of the number of theme groups and more meaningful and substantive cooperation, including joint strategic planning and collaborative programming. The external evaluation of common country assessment/UNDAF cited the excessive use of thematic groups and their duplication, especially as compared with other exercises that make use of them (i.e., the comprehensive development framework, PRSPs, sector-wide approaches and donor coordination arrangements). Meanwhile, available data also shows that the theme groups, with support from a dedicated staff, usually generate more substantive cooperation in the area of joint planning, joint programmes and, in a few cases, resource mobilization. The improved functioning and coherence of a country team tend to correlate closely with how participatory its theme groups are and how effectively they work. The involvement of government representatives, donors and other international and national development partners in the thematic groups vary widely.

73. In order to improve support to field-level operation, ACC and UNDG have enhanced their efforts in improving communications with resident coordinators and the country teams and providing policy guidance, training and substantive and management support, through (a) issuing a number of guidelines and guidance notes on key operational and programme issues; (b) reaching the field offices via improved RCNet and the newly launched Devlink;[7] (c) streamlining the training management mechanism, revising training materials for the resident coordinator induction programme, including support to the common country assessment/UNDAF by the field offices, including the regional commissions; and (d) continuing to provide dedicated resident coordinator resources for coordination activities from UNDP.

74. Nonetheless, challenges remain: the relationship of the resident coordinator system with Governments and other development partners needs particular attention. Besides, the majority of the resident coordinators acknowledged in their responses to the resident coordinator questionnaire that further efforts should be made to involve other development partners, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, bilateral donors and civil society. There is also room to reinvigorate the commitment of ail United Nations organizations to the resident coordinator system. It is important, in

particular, to have more substantive coordination in the area of joint programming, to delegate a uniform level of authority to the field level, and to simplify and harmonize procedures (see following section for initiatives under way). Given that the United Nations system is better positioned to share experience within a country and between countries, more creative means should be sought to share best practices. An effective performance appraisal system, with linkage to competency assessment and opportunity for future career development, could encourage high morale and considerably enhance the functioning of the resident coordinator system.

B. Simplification and harmonization

75. Experience and a number of analyses conducted in recent years indicate that, notwithstanding progress made in the process of harmonizing programme cycles and programming procedures, the diversity of rules, procedures, policies and formats that have been in effect over the broad scope of programme development and of operations of the United Nations system continue to place large burdens on recipient countries and complicate the United Nations system's coordination and management capacities. The Secretary-General, in a previous report addressing the simplification and harmonization of programming, operational and administrative procedures that was prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/192, gave a thorough review and assessment of the institutional provisions at the field level and of efforts made by the United Nations system in this area, particularly regarding programme cycles, processes, decentralization of authority, and reorientation of executing modalities (see E/2000/46, sect. III).

76. While the General Assembly and the Council have frequently expressed the need for substantial reforms in the design, coordination and delivery of United Nations development support and urged appropriate actions to that end, it continues to be very difficult, as the above-mentioned report found, to achieve progress in harmonizing rules and procedures within the United Nations development system.

77. In this regard, the following are only two examples of a number of factors that are seen as hindering the effective development and conduct of programming and of operational activities: (a) diversity of programming procedures is a consequence of the diversity of mandates and of the institutional autonomy of the governing bodies of each organization; and (b) rules and procedures constitute the "nervous system" of each organization, and there is no compelling administrative force within an organization to introduce changes for the purpose of being consistent with other parts of the system.

78. Nevertheless, even in the light of the acknowledged complexity of these and other factors, the General Assembly decided that changes in operational modalities are required to obtain effective impact and to maintain the necessary growth of development activities and of support provided by the United Nations system.

79. Along these lines and among other things, the General Assembly called for the promotion and creation of common guidelines on procedures, especially as they relate to programme components and project formulation, approval, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and administration. The changes that organizations did manage to introduce were usually of small consequence and slow to take effect, which largely explains the General Assembly's repeated urging to the funds and programmes to adopt measures and establish timetables for the advancement of

simplification and harmonization of procedures (see E/2000/46, sect. III, paras. 124 and 125).

80. Relatively good results have been achieved in the area of harmonization of programming cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes, which are considered essential prerequisites for the UNDAF process. As of March 2001, of a total of 94 countries in which harmonization is feasible, the number of countries with harmonized programming cycles reached 85. There were 18 countries where harmonization was not considered feasible and 47 where harmonization is not appropriate due to limited United Nations presence or programme activities. If this trend holds, it is estimated that by the end of 2004 99 per cent of qualifying programme countries will have harmonized their cycles.

81. The boards of the funds and programmes placed emphasis on the country-driven nature of programme development, with the Governments and representatives of the United Nations funds and programmes, as well as United Nations agencies, firmly in control of the process. Various options for harmonizing programme development are under consideration, including procedures for defining responsibilities and for preparation of country programmes and submission processes. In the programming area, efforts are under way to develop common formats for project design, which are expected to increasingly facilitate the promotion of joint or harmonized development initiatives, especially in the context of the common country assessment and UNDAF.

Table 1
Status of harmonization of programming cycles, as of March 2001

Category	*Description*	*Number of countries*	*Percentage*
A.	Countries with programme cycles harmonized	85	93
B.	Countries where the harmonization of programme cycles is still awaiting final alignment	5	6
C.	Countries where plans for harmonization have not been finalized	1	1
	Subtotal of countries where harmonization is feasible	**91**	**100**
D.	Countries where conditions remain uncertain/unstable and harmonization is not feasible	18	-
E.	Countries where harmonization is not appropriate due to limited United Nations presence or programme activities	47	-
	Total	**156**	-

82. With respect to programme approval processes, the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA met in June 2000 and adopted a series of key principles to facilitate programmatic complementarities, particularly the programme approval processes. These principles are: (a) simplify the current processes in order to reduce the burden imposed on programme countries and United Nations country teams; (b) encourage synergies between programmes of UNDG partner agencies; (c) promote decentralization; (d) ensure accountability of the executive boards through early

inputs; and (e) ensure the centrality of the common country assessment/UNDAF as a basis for programme development.

83. Moreover, an exclusive focus on the United Nations system regarding harmonization would be inadequate if it were not viewed as part of a need to address every effort on harmonization of procedures to parallel activities of other external development partners, multilateral agencies, bilateral donors and international NGOs.

84. Some inter-agency efforts have been made in the area of harmonization, mostly in the development of agreements on common guidelines. Inter-agency mechanisms, such as CCPOQ[8] and UNDG, have been active vehicles of these initiatives.[9] There is some progress in the area of decentralization and delegation of authority, although it is uneven between funds and programmes and specialized agencies, continuing to impact poorly on decision-making processes at the country level.

85. United Nations specialized agencies have undertaken considerable reorganization, including the decentralization of responsibilities at the country level. Nevertheless, more progress is required in harmonization of procedures, particularly in the context of the ACC machinery.

86. It should be noted, however, that, during 2000 UNDG and CCPOQ accelerated their efforts to promote the harmonization of programming cycles and procedures, particularly joint programmes, joint mid-term reviews and harmonized administrative procedures for national project personnel. These efforts need to be further pursued.

87. In September 2000, the CCPOQ working group on the United Nations resident coordinator system agreed with the draft guidance note on joined programming and decided to extend discussion on this subject to the entire United Nations system, and designated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as task manager to lead this process. The working group agreed that the guidance note, with a menu of options, along with other needed revisions to allow for the participation by a larger group of United Nations organizations, would merit United Nations system-wide endorsement. UNESCO organized an informal meeting in November 2000 for this purpose, and one of its main decisions was to launch a pilot exercise on joint programming for field-testing of the draft guidance note in seven countries.[10]

88. Procedures for joint mid-term reviews of country programmes and UNDAFs have been established and are now being field-tested in two countries[11] by their respective country teams with the objective of making them available for general use in 2001. Once programming cycles have been harmonized, the joint mid-term reviews of individual country programmes and UNDAFs will be much easier to complete and demands on the host Governments that have been participating in the review of country programmes of the individual funds and programmes are expected to be significantly lessened.

89. Of special importance is the concern about obtaining equitable treatment of employees of different agencies that work in the same country and are often performing similar functions. A guidance note on administrative procedures for national project personnel was prepared earlier in 2001 within the framework of UNDG to address mainly the questions of remuneration and daily subsistence

allowance (DSA) rates for national project personnel. The note envisions consultations between interested agencies on salary scales that could be used by all United Nations agencies, and discusses the conduct of surveys of labour markets as well as of national staff of a country as bases for the establishment of salary scales for national project personnel.[12] In addition, a common definition of national project personnel was attained. Nine countries[13] were identified for field-testing based on information contained in the resident coordinators' annual reports. In these countries, the United Nations system has taken initiatives to harmonize and coordinate administrative policies and procedures for application to locally recruited national personnel.[14]

90. The guidance note on administrative procedures for national project personnel is a step in the right direction but it also reveals the extent of differences in operational modalities and approaches between agencies, and much work needs to be done to further harmonize the various procedures and practices of the United Nations organizations in this area.

The view from the field

91. A review and assessment of resident coordinator replies to the questionnaire indicates that over two thirds of reports received consider as essential the simplification and harmonization of monitoring and reporting requirements (just under one third of resident coordinators consider it desirable but not essential). With respect to financial regulations, 80 per cent of resident coordinators believe that simplification and harmonization is essential for effective programming and implementation of United Nations system activities.

92. Closely relevant is the matter of decentralization and delegation of authority by all United Nations organizations. Three quarters of resident coordinators consider it essential for the effective conduct of their functions and responsibilities (one quarter of resident coordinators call it desirable but not essential).

93. Synchronization of mid-term reviews is considered essential by less than 40 per cent of resident coordinators. Nearly 55 per cent consider it desirable but not essential.

94. Views about the promotion of joint evaluation of projects and joint mid-term reviews are about equally divided between those considering it essential and those considering it desirable but not essential.

Conclusions

95. In approaching every task of simplifying and harmonizing rules and procedures, it should be borne in mind that while the requirements or initiatives in this regard will usually originate at the operational level in the country, systematic progress cannot be achieved merely by actions at the country level without the firm support of headquarters. Major reforms on procedures require action at the headquarters level first.

Table 2
Importance of improvements in the opinion of the resident coordinator system
(Percentage)

Function	*Essential*	*Desirable but not essential*	*Minimal importance*
Simplify and harmonize monitoring and reporting requirements	72.6	27.4	-
Simplify and harmonize financial regulations	77.9	21.2	1.0
Introduce equal levels of decentralization and delegation of authorities by all United Nations system organizations	73.1	26.0	1.0
Synchronize the mid-term reviews	37.5	54.8	7.7
Promote joint evaluation of projects and joint mid-term reviews	47.2	49.1	3.8

96. Although measurable harmonization has been achieved, much remains to be done to ease the burden on country offices and national counterparts. Delays in the common country assessment/UNDAF roll-out have constituted missed opportunities for developing more effectively coordinated programmes. UNDG partners continue efforts to explore ways by which existing procedures and practices can be further simplified, while maintaining appropriate levels of accountability and quality. Areas of focus include the simplification of documentation, the streamlining of reporting requirements and the coordination of in-country programming processes, such as mid-term reviews, country programme preparation and programme implementation.

97. Simplified and harmonized administrative procedures for national project personnel hired by different United Nations organizations will be developed on the basis of an analysis by UNDG, in accordance with current practices of some country teams. The guidance notes on administrative procedures for national project personnel prepared by UNDG for this purpose could be a practical response to government calls for harmonization of the administrative procedures for national project personnel currently applied by different United Nations organizations.

C. Common premises and sharing of administrative services

98. As a key component of the United Nations programme of reform, several measures have been taken to support the planning, implementation and oversight of the United Nations house programme and advance common services initiatives. A clear definition and criteria for the identification of United Nations houses was endorsed by the Secretary-General on 10 February 1998. A new methodology for the selection and analysis of opportunities to establish additional common premises/United Nations houses and an executive decision-making process to facilitate the entire process were put in place. In addition, the guidelines on the administrative management of the resident coordinator system, approved by CCPOQ in September 1998 on behalf of ACC, have been developed to help to promote common services by providing a basis for their equitable co-management by user entities. Subsequently, new guidelines on operational management of common services were developed, in consultation with operations managers from the field, to

facilitate the implementation of common and shared services at the country level. Guidance and support are being provided to country teams to promote the establishment and enhancement of common premises and sharing of administrative services.

Common premises/United Nations houses

99. A total of 41 United Nations houses have been inaugurated or designated between 1996 and December 2000. Since 1998, the UNDG Management Group on Services and Premises has been regularly reviewing proposals from country teams, examining possibilities for sharing common premises in a cost-efficient manner and meeting the requirements for a United Nations house. The Management Group reviewed 55 proposals in 1998, 58 in 1999 and 32 in 2000. In 2000, the pace of proposals being submitted to the Management Group had slowed as the more straightforward opportunities for establishing United Nations houses had already been examined, and where criteria had been met United Nations houses had been designated in 1998 and 1999. Recognizing this, the Management Group identified and contacted 43 countries where there might be potential for establishing a United Nations house. Since 1998, the UNDG Management Group has undertaken 30 missions, six of them in 2000. A total of 38 countries were visited on these missions, sometimes on more than one occasion, to offer technical support to country teams in locating and working out logistics of establishing United Nations houses. The support of the Management Group, especially through the missions, was cited in the resident coordinator annual reports of 2000 as very useful to the country teams in negotiating with Governments and evaluating potential premises.

100. During 1996-2000, the results indicated in table 3 have been achieved.

Table 3
Establishment of common premises/United Nations houses, 1996-2000

Date	*Status*	*No.*	*Countries*
1996-1997	Inaugurated/designated	4	Lesotho, Malaysia, Russian Federation, South Africa
1998	Inaugurated/designated	26	Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Comoros, Costa Rica, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Honduras, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Swaziland, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates
1999	Inaugurated/designated	6	Belgium, Belize, Latvia, Pakistan, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine
2000	Inaugurated/designated	5	Bahrain, Botswana, Ecuador, Gambia, Slovakia
2001-2004	Proposed United Nations houses under consideration		The target is set for five United Nations houses to be designated in 2001 and to bring the total to at least 50 by 2004

101. A consolidated common database and lease management maintenance software (*Aperture*) was developed during 1997 and 1998 and completed in 1999 to facilitate the management of country office premises. Updating and enhancing *Aperture* and production of management reports has been an ongoing effort.

Common services

102. Based on the CCPOQ guidelines on the administrative management of the resident coordinator system, covering the area of common services, the UNDG Management Group on Services and Premises is developing tools and guidance on the implementation of common and shared services. As a first step, the Group collected systematic information on the current status of and experience with common or shared services in country offices. Data was received from 126 country offices, supplying information from 446 questionnaires from UNDG and non-UNDG agencies. A database on common services was established as a result. As a follow-up to this survey, the UNDG organized a workshop on common services, with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom, to evaluate experience to date and to develop operational guidelines for the enhancement of effective, efficient operations of common services at the country level. On the basis of this information and best practices, the UNDG Management Group has developed guidelines, including model service agreements, which could be adapted by country teams, possible standards for services provision and indicators for service performance measurement, and suggestions for management of the common services as well as related accountability and cost-recovery matters.

103. The most recent questionnaire addressed to the United Nations resident coordinator system produced the results given in table 4.

Table 4
Percentage of common or shared main administrative services achieved by United Nations country teams

	100	*90-71*	*70-51*	*50-25*	*>25*	*0*
Financial	3.1	4.1	16.3	29.6	35.7	11.2
Security	50.0	33.0	9.0	2.0	3.0	3.0
Personnel-related services	2.0	9.9	14.9	33.7	30.7	8.9
Conference facilities	13.9	14.9	18.8	15.0	23.8	12.9
Telecommunication and information technology	2.0	17.6	20.6	22.5	30.4	6.9
Transportation	-	1.0	8.1	10.1	41.4	39.4
Procurement/contracting	1.0	3.0	8.9	18.8	40.6	27.7
Liaison (administrative) services	1.0	7.2	18.6	25.8	32.0	15.5

Table 5
Time-frames established by United Nations country teams to achieve full common administrative services
(Percentages)

	No time-frame	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005 or beyond*
Financial	85.2	5.7	3.4	2.3	2.3	1.0
Security	46.7	44.0	6.7	1.3	1.3	-
Personnel-related services	80.2	5.8	5.8	2.3	3.5	2.3
Conference facilities	62.2	14.6	12.2	6.1	2.4	2.4
Telecommunication and information technology	52.9	24.1	14.9	6.9	2.3	-
Transportation	83.0	2.3	8.0	1.1	3.4	2.3
Procurement/contracting	67.4	9.0	13.5	6.7	3.4	1.1
Liaison (administrative) services	66.7	14.3	11.9	6.0	2.4	-

104. The data contained in table 5 shows that although above 25 per cent of common/share services have been achieved in basically all main administrative services except transportation and procurement/contracting, only security and telecommunication and information technology could achieve about 50 per cent of sharing by the year 2002. To improve this situation, the operational guidelines for the implementation of common services were approved by UNDG and adopted by CCPOQ on behalf of ACC in September 2000. UNDG has developed a proposal to field test the guidelines in some pilot countries, starting in 2001, in order to further improve the guidelines and develop a global roll-out for common services implementation.

Lessons learned and challenges

105. Through UNDG's experience during the first three years of the United Nations house initiative, the following lessons have been learned:

(a) Many existing premises are insufficient in size to accommodate the staff of the four UNDG executive committee members;

(b) In many cases, moving to a United Nations house may initially result in an uneven financial burden, with some organizations experiencing benefits while others incur higher costs. Therefore, there is a need for support for these initiatives, especially during initial stages, when set-up costs can overshadow long-term cost benefits;

(c) The modality of seeking appropriate and ready to occupy rent-free premises from Governments needs to be further and more aggressively pursued, as it is the most cost-effective modality in establishing a United Nations house;

(d) Obtaining land grants from the Government for the construction of office buildings by UNDG participating organizations tends to be the highest-risk and least preferred modality for the establishment of United Nations houses;

(e) Use of outsourced professional and technical expertise has been a valuable element in analysing proposals from country teams;

(f) Harmonization of terms and conditions of the basic cooperation agreements of UNDG partners in regard to provision of office space would facilitate negotiations with Governments;

(g) To facilitate common services at the country level, there is a need for the harmonization of administrative services and training in administrative practices and common services;

(h) The rapidly advancing technology should be further taken advantage of to increase cohesion and cooperation at the country level, for example by sharing information technology (IT) services, establishing a global information network on lessons learned and good practices, and creating virtual United Nations houses when actual United Nations houses are not possible.

106. Experience to date has indicated that many such challenges can be overcome through active dialogue between participating agencies.

D. Specialized agencies

107. An integral part of the United Nations development system is the United Nations specialized agencies. Their full and substantive participation as partners in United Nations system development work is essential. They are the repositories in large measure of the technical capacities of the United Nations system. Important changes have occurred in the relationship with the specialized agencies in the last two decades in response to changing development trends and requirements. It is essential to mobilize the technical expertise of the agencies, which are an integral part of the United Nations system, since that may sizeably contribute to the system's ability to meet development challenges.

108. One of the concerns about the functioning of the system has been that the bulk of its technical and substantive capabilities has been concentrated at headquarters to be deployed on the basis of need and request from the country offices. Resources and locus of expertise at all levels — global, regional, national — should be commensurate with functions and responsibilities. While there are important global tasks that require strong global presence, substantive skills required to backstop country demands should be within easy reach. Due to budgetary constraints, some agencies have in fact reduced their staff at the country level. The focus of development is local and the locus of United Nations system expertise for development cooperation should also be, in large measure, local. The global "think tank" function and normative work of the agencies are crucial but as a response to backstop specific situations and requests, and they should complement each other.

109. Recent moves by some organizations towards setting up or strengthening subregional offices and regionalization have to be kept in tandem with creating a country-focused critical mass of substantive expertise for rapid response. In the changing context of growing country-specific but rapidly shifting needs, greater reliance on field presence and expertise is necessary. Setting up subregional offices is a step forward, but they cannot substitute for the need for local, specific and rapid response. There is a need for closer integration of agencies' approaches on subjects of common concern, such as food security and poverty reduction, at the country

level. Representatives of United Nations agencies function in dual capacities in the field: as representatives of the concerned organization and as members of the resident coordinator system, and thus must be able to function in a way that they complement and draw upon each other's expertise.

110. The role and relevance of United Nations specialized agencies will become more pivotal in the emerging knowledge society. United Nations specialized agencies are also technological organizations. The integrated approach to development and the development of such sectors as agriculture, health, industry and communications are two sides of the same coin. Growth and higher productivity in such sectors as agriculture is essential for integrated and sustainable development. Many developing countries need an international organization to provide information and help in the search for scrutiny of and access to technological data. The United Nations system has to respond to such requests. The concept of "shared skills" between the organizations of the United Nations system at the country level also needs to be pursued to achieve economies of scale and enhanced effectiveness.

E. Field structure

111. Field structure should be looked at not only as a country office of a United Nations system organization but even more as an integral part of national development infrastructure. The staffing of the offices should be demand-responsive and reflect the needs and requirements that might be placed on the organization, to be determined in consultation with the Government. In the disposition of the substantive skills of an organization, the minimum but time-bound capacities at the individual country level necessary for rapid and effective response should be a major factor. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/192, called for the United Nations system skill profile to be tailored to national development needs rather than determined by the institutional structure of the United Nations. This important decision has to be operationalized.

112. Not all specialized agencies have field presence, particularly the smaller but often the more technical and technological ones. Measures are required to ensure that lack of field presence does not lead to depriving the country of the needed multilateral assistance. While their scale of operations may not warrant wide field presence and budgetary constraints virtually prohibit such a course, a selective and limited representation in countries where their area of specialty is of high priority might be considered.

F. Cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

113. As indicated in the management plan for implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/192, strengthening the interaction between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in the area of operational activities has focused on four main elements: closer linkages regarding arrangements for development support, increased policy dialogue, greater efforts to ensure a practical impact and enhanced cooperation at the country level.

114. During the period under review, a joint exploratory review on relations between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was undertaken, which included that of numerous recommendations that are applicable at the policy level, at the headquarters level and at the level of country operations (see 1998/61).

115. The common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines specifically include the encouragement of collaboration and invite the Bretton Woods institutions to participate in country teams for the formulation of these instruments.

116. At the same time, upon the adoption of the comprehensive development framework, the World Bank proposed to the United Nations system to stimulate exchanges and participation in this work by members of UNDG and by other agencies of the United Nations system. This was expanded to cover exchanges of information and experiences in relation to the PRSP process when it was introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

117. Progressively broader and more substantive inter-agency discussions have been held at intervals on these experiences. At the field level, country teams have been active in relation to some of the frameworks launched by the Bretton Woods institutions, and have recently been contributing ideas and proposals to help Governments and the Bretton Woods institutions take into account important elements that had been inadequately covered.

118. Most resident coordinators believe that this collaboration focuses on information-sharing and on supporting Governments' capacity to mobilize and coordinate donor engagement and resources. Regarding collaboration and participation in each other's programmes and projects, results are mixed, ranging from moderate to significant involvement of the respective organizations. This was also the pattern regarding involvement in the common country assessment and UNDAF processes, as well as United Nations system involvement in Bretton Woods institutions mechanisms, such as the comprehensive development framework and PRSP processes.

119. Potential areas for future cooperation include more intensive cooperation on their strategic and programming frameworks and initiatives, closer collaboration in the working of the resident coordinator system, and implementation of plans of action of global conferences and the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

G. Cooperation with regional development banks

120. In its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly encouraged greater cooperation between the regional banks and all funds and programmes of the United Nations system. The extent of collaboration is currently quite limited but has considerable potential for growth.

121. The great majority of resident coordinators and Governments feel that there is a good degree of information sharing between the United Nations system and the regional banks. Many resident coordinators also believe that the United Nations system and the banks show some degree of collaboration in programmes and projects and in supporting government capacity for coordination of interactions with donors and for resource mobilization. United Nations agencies are in some instances involved in identification, design, supervision and/or implementation of regional bank projects.

122. In particular, WHO and FAO report growing collaboration with the regional banks to take on new programmes related, for example, to the AIDS epidemic or to drug control.

123. With respect to the direction of current work and interest in the regional banks, the African Development Bank adopted a new vision statement in 1999, which calls for greater partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations system, bilateral agencies, the private sector, civil society and NGOs.

124. The Asian Development Bank launched in March 2001 a new long-term strategy to help developing member countries eradicate extreme poverty by 2015, in keeping with the international development goals agreed in recent United Nations-sponsored global conferences. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which was involved in creating the Asian Bank, continues to have a close relationship with it.

125. Close collaboration continues to be in effect between the Inter-American Development Bank and ECLAC, as well as with other United Nations organizations at the country level, especially in support of the economic integration of Latin America.

126. Views expressed by several United Nations agencies suggest that regional banks could reassess their lending portfolios in light of international conferences and conventions, priorities for reaching international development targets (e.g., development targets for 2015) and related sectoral priorities.

127. In that regard, there may be ways for combining the financial strength and expertise of the regional banks with the analytical, advocacy, technical and other skills of the United Nations system. The comparative advantages of the various institutions could make for greater synergy and impact of efforts in response to national requests.

H. Monitoring and evaluation

128. The legislation emanating from the last three triennial policy reviews included provisions designed to improve the contribution that monitoring and evaluation of operational activities make to their effectiveness and impact. The principles on which this legislation was based were the need: (a) to involve national authorities in monitoring and evaluation and to strengthen their capacity to undertake and use the results of it; (b) to move the focus of monitoring and evaluation away from project-level issues and a concern for inputs towards questions of programme effectiveness and impact; (c) to encourage joint evaluations so that all elements of United Nations programmes in a country will be assessed coherently and feedback be provided to those who need and can use it; and (d) to focus on using the results of evaluations to learn how to improve the effectiveness and impact of United Nations system operational activities and to see how best they can contribute to Member States.

129. The United Nations system has been regularly consulted about the appropriateness and utility of this legislation and has indicated its support for it. It is clear that many United Nations agencies have devoted careful thought, human resources and effort to achieving these ends. Nonetheless, all of the evaluations of impact note the absence or weakness of an institutional memory of the United Nations system, particularly at the country level, and the need for greater learning

from experience by the United Nations system. Many entities within (and outside) the United Nations development system have diligently addressed the problem of learning lessons and feeding them back into operations over the years. Typical measures that different parts of the system have taken include electronic databases, formal inclusion of lessons learned in programme and project reviews, and training and other related mechanisms.

130. The expenditure on the monitoring and evaluation of operational activities is reported to be close to 1 per cent of programme resources. That means that if operational activities involve $4.5 billion per annum, some $45 million is being spent in their monitoring and evaluation. According to the six impact evaluations (and the previous six) they do not appear to be having the desired effect in terms of feedback. This leads to the question as to whether the United Nations system and Member States are receiving the best return on the use of these resources.

131. It has been noted elsewhere that there is a trend away from project-level activities and a general move towards strategic and policy issues. It is not clear whether there has been a consequent and equivalent shift in the focus of monitoring and evaluation away from technical concerns of issues of project management towards more strategic concerns of country-level effectiveness and programme and organizational impact.

132. Nevertheless, a number of United Nations entities are clearly endeavouring to move in this direction. Examples include UNDP result-oriented annual report and its move towards results-based management. Another is the work of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to come up with indicators of corporate performance. UNICEF work linking its work to the quantitative goals of the World Summit for Children is well documented.

133. In its resolution 55/162 on follow-up to the Millennium Summit, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General urgently to prepare a long-term "road map" towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration within the United Nations system — and to focus on the results and benchmarks achieved, identify gaps in implementation and strategies for reducing them, and highlight in particular cross-sectoral issues and cross-cutting themes on development and peace and security.

134. This provides the basic framework against which most future operational activities should be judged. Work remains to be done in translating these millennial goals into targets to be used at agency, country or regional levels. The United Nations system has already made significant progress in this area. For instance, there is a matrix of indicators and targets which is to be used by United Nations country teams when preparing their common country assessments.

135. However, additional work is needed, both by specialized agencies for sectoral goals and United Nations entities dealing with cross-cutting issues, such as HIV/AIDS, drug abuse or capacity-building, to elaborate the benchmarks, targets and indicators that can be used in the design of national and, where appropriate, regional programmes designed to reduce all aspects of poverty. The capacity-building aspects of poverty eradication require further work if appropriate indicators are to be applied. As noted in the publication that emerged from the first round of the evaluations,[15] any assessment system or set of indicators for capacity-building must go beyond the application of the narrow, reductionist, somewhat mechanistic

measurement systems that are sometimes in evidence in the international development community. Inappropriate monitoring systems can twist programme design and management out of shape and can damage the very performance that most participants are seeking.

136. Despite legitimate concerns about lack of agreed definitions, benchmarks, indicators, data and institutional memory, each of the impact evaluation teams was able to make some definite assessments about the quality of United Nations system operations and their impact. This suggests that there is relevant substance to be drawn from "reflective practitioners" talking to reflective actors, and that much more could be learned about how to eradicate poverty successfully if all relevant United Nations entities were to internalize this process and elaborate for their respective fields, the basic standards to use in assessing monitoring and evaluating United Nations operational activities, the basic lessons that can be learned from such a dialogue and a method for feeding back any lessons learned into operations.

VIII. Evolving dimensions of operational activities

A. Humanitarian assistance, peace-building and development

137. United Nations interventions in crisis and post-crisis situations, an important part of United Nations work at the country level during the past decade, will continue to pose a mounting challenge to the United Nations development system, underscoring an increasing intersection between peace and development, peacemaking and peace-building, human rights and humanitarian assistance, relief and reconstruction. According to one estimate, there are as many as 45 countries that are termed as special development situations. The General Assembly has been calling for a comprehensive approach, including the early application of development tools in humanitarian emergencies.

138. In 1999, the Security Council invited the Economic and Social Council to contribute to the development of a long-term support programme for Haiti. In 2000, the General Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council to consider establishing an advisory group on countries emerging from conflict in Africa, and the Council is expected to respond to this request at the high-level segment on Africa to be held at its substantive session of 2001. The presidential statement resulting from the Security Council's meeting in February 2001 on the comprehensive approach to peace-building notes that peace-building encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms (see S/PRST/2001/5).

139. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/502), virtually every part of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, is currently engaged in one form of peace-building or another, because peace-building embraces many activities, including political, military, diplomatic, development, human rights, child protection, gender, humanitarian assistance and many other issues.

140. At the country level, United Nations resident coordinators, normally responsible for development cooperation, also serve as humanitarian coordinators, where needed.

141. Country teams consulted for the triennial comprehensive policy review expressed mixed views on the effectiveness of the interactions among relief, development and the political and peace operations of the United Nations, as well as of the linkages among the Consolidated Appeals Process and the common country assessment and UNDAF processes. Similar views were expressed on the linkages among the resident coordinator, humanitarian coordinator and special representative of the Secretary-General functions. To help strengthen and clarify these interrelationships, the Secretary-General issued a guidance note on the subject in December 2000.

142. Consultations with the system and Member States suggested that greater emphasis should be given on coordination and consultations among all these areas.

143. From the perspective of development cooperation, it is relevant that the resident coordinator system is working in the country before, during and after crises, and can thus contribute significantly to a critical continuum in this process.

144. The strategic framework approach applied in specific areas has identified relevant principles and relationships. Accordingly, elements of this approach may be applicable in many countries, reinforcing the importance of a comprehensive approach.

145. Strengthening the United Nations country-level capacity to implement such a comprehensive approach will ensure more coherence. Both the common country assessment and UNDAF offer significant opportunity to identify and implement preventive and post-conflict peace-building strategies. The peace-building process requires coherence in the immediate and longer-term analysis, planning and programming. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are well situated at the country level to help meet the challenge, particularly through the resident coordinator system, although competence at the country level in this area may require adjustments.

146. Recognizing that the most serious challenge to sustainable development is conflict, UNDG is working to ensure that peace-building and conflict prevention concerns are integrated in the common country assessments, UNDAFs and emergency or recovery plans. These concerns can be addressed only in close partnership with national Governments and civil society.

B. Human rights, including the right to development

147. In its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly recognized human rights, including the right to development, as an important element of the development cooperation efforts of the United Nations system.[16]

148. The United Nations Millennium Declaration gives special emphasis to the promotion of democracy, strengthening the rule of law and respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. The resolution reiterates the importance of upholding the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promoting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all.

149. The greater majority of the country teams report that Governments in programme countries are requesting increased support in implementing international conventions and support in capacity-building in the area of human rights. Member States confirm the same evolution.

150. A number of country teams report the involvement of the resident coordinator system in implementing the United Nations mandates in human rights, including the right to development through consultations and advocacy, human rights outreach and education and programme planning, but results vary from country to country.

151. The United Nations system has committed itself to a more explicit and consistent human rights approach. Some of its individual organizations have a long and significant involvement, while for others the implications of this evolution have not yet been fully internalized.

152. The common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines adopted by UNDG in 1999 include attention to human rights issues in the programming of the United Nations system development cooperation. Thereafter, agencies of the system devised a set of guidelines and related information on human rights for use by the resident coordinator system. On behalf of ACC, CCPOQ approved the document in March 2000. The guidelines treat human rights principles and mechanisms, how to approach and assist Governments and how to integrate human rights into work programmes.

153. The common country assessment and UNDAF have provided a vehicle for mobilizing attention on these issues since demands for technical cooperation linked to human rights are growing and changing. From a separate field of technical assistance, human rights are increasingly expected to be integrated into key thematic areas of development cooperation, in particular in relation to poverty, gender and governance. Consequently, the capacity of country teams to address human rights issues needs to be enhanced.

C. Information and communication technologies

154. Information and communication technologies are now at the hinge of global change, knowledge gap and the cutting edge of competition. Communication technologies are also loosening monopolistic control over information, promoting transparency and accountability. The emerging knowledge-based and networked economy is also changing the contrast and dynamics of development. A wired or wireless society is a more open society.

155. The world information market grew by 12.2 per cent a year from 1985 to 1995, and continues to grow. This rate is almost three times the growth rate of world gross domestic product (GDP). But a large number of developing countries have lagged behind. Electronic communications, so commonplace in the North, are still scarce in the South. The digital divide is real. By any measure — whether number of telephones, of Internet users and providers or of computers — developing countries lag. Wide disparities persist within the South as well. For example, sub-Saharan Africa has just one phone for every 5,300 people. Polarization of communications includes urban-rural divide. In parts of Asia and Africa, rural telephone density is

just one fifth of that in the largest cities. Even the goal of bringing a telephone within easy access of every global inhabitant by the end of the twentieth century has not been reached.

156. Despite the backlog and impediments, new technologies offer a new hope and an opportunity. The plummeting cost of IT makes it less capital-intensive and more affordable to less affluent societies. Another barrier that they can help to overcome is the high cost of fully developed physical infrastructure, a major development impediment in many developing societies. Infrastructure is still critical, but it is an infrastructure of knowledge, knowledge workers and knowledge farmers with the ability to access, search and use information.

157. The chronic shortage of schools, teachers, doctors and markets in remote areas can now be overcome through virtual schools, tele-medicine and tele-marketing. The Internet has provided instant access to critical information to farmers and workers. It can open marketing doors to small and medium-sized enterprises without expensive infrastructure. It is a powerful tool for poverty reduction and the empowerment of the poor, weak and vulnerable. In the all-important area of agricultural productivity and food security, biotechnology and new farming, such new technologies offer an immense opportunity because they are less field- and scale-specific and more plant-specific. They lend themselves to application by small and marginal farmers, the bulk of the rural poor. Remote-sensing technologies offer pinpoint accuracy concerning what exists on the ground, an invaluable tool to planners and administrators.

158. Although a majority of countries are critically short of basic communications infrastructure, a number of developing countries are seizing the opportunity opened by information technology. Among other things, they are using the potential of these technologies for stimulating exports, microchips and software, to position specific priority industries globally and for improved administrative services. A major breakthrough is in the area of good governance. E-governance is one of the pillars of the IT edifice and a means to move towards a more open, responsive, accountable and transparent system. It includes wide and extensive use of videogconferencing for dissemination, monitoring and evaluation of performance of public officials. On-line registration of legal deeds and one-stop services for citizens are made possible.

159. The international development community can backstop national efforts and make a crucial difference. Many organizations of the United Nations system are involved in assisting countries by offering policy advice and technical assistance. Several United Nations system organizations, including specialized agencies, have activities that use IT as a management tool, for information outreach and in their technical cooperation. The United Nations has launched the Health InterNetwork for developing countries and the United Nations Information Technology Service. The Global Development Gateway of the World Bank is another example. A brief indication of some aspects of IT was included in the previous report of the Secretary-General on operational activities (see E/2000/46/Add.1), mostly related to connectivity and United Nations system web sites.

160. The ministerial declaration adopted by the Council in 2000 succinctly captures the current state of knowledge and the actions to be taken by various partners. The declaration was endorsed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and thus constitutes a major mandate to the United Nations system. The Council called for the establishment of an information and communication technology (ICT) task force

to promote the use of ICT as a cutting-edge tool for development. Following this mandate, the Secretary-General constituted a high-level ICT advisory group and undertook worldwide consultations, and on the basis of the outcome of those consultations the Council authorized the Secretary-General to set up the task force. A major intergovernmental initiative outside the United Nations system is the setting-up of the Digital Opportunity Task Force by the Group of Eight major industrialized nations. The forthcoming International Telecommunication Union (ITU)-sponsored World Summit of the Information Society, to be held in 2003, will review the role of communications, investment and technology in creating the information society infrastructure and in bridging the digital divide.

161. The ministerial declaration, among other things, called upon the international organizations, funds and programmes and United Nations specialized agencies to facilitate the transfer of ICTs, in particular, to developing countries, and to support efforts towards capacity-building and production of content. Through its operational activities, the United Nations development system can contribute to this process. Not only can its effectiveness and impact be greatly enhanced with the use of ICT but the United Nations system can also develop innovative modalities for strengthening the ICT capacity of developing countries. Knowledge networking is emerging as a key area of development, and requires much more active United Nations system support. ICTs can be integrated and applied in all sectors of programmes in innovative ways. Agencies are seeking to expand their capacities and systems, and are developing programmes to respond to and make use of the transformations taking place, but the whole area of ICT for development needs huge and innovative new steps.

162. The task is both sectoral and cross-sectoral, involving both United Nations specialized agencies, including the World Bank, and United Nations funds and programmes. Resident coordinators have reported that as many as 40 per cent of programme countries have expressed interest in seeking United Nations assistance in mobilizing ICT as a tool of development. Half the responding countries have identified technology transfer and assistance in obtaining access to foreign skills as one of their least successful areas in receiving assistance. Given the growing importance of technology, particularly information and communication technologies for development, this requires attention.

D. Gender in development

163. In paragraphs 25, 46 and 47 of its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly emphasized the need for mainstreaming gender in the United Nations operational activities in all fields and encouraged measures to be taken to improve gender balance in the Secretariat. In the three years under review, commitment to this issue has been increasingly strong and some progress has been achieved.

Mainstreaming gender

164. Gender perspective has been given consistent consideration in country programmes/projects design (for a detailed assessment of progress in implementing the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2000, see E/CN.6/2000/3). Among the more than 100 resident coordinators responding to the triennial comprehensive policy review questionnaire, 66 per cent and 79 per cent

acknowledge significant gender mainstreaming in the formulation of programmes and projects, and in the common country assessment/UNDAF, respectively. The donor and recipient countries' responses to the same questions reveal the same pattern.

165. The special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in June 2000, has given further impetus to the issue of gender mainstreaming.

166. The common country assessment/UNDAF exercises afford the operational activities of all United Nations agencies an entry point to mainstream gender systematically. The UNDG Sub-Group on Gender has been actively involved from the very beginning of the common country assessment/UNDAF guidelines preparation and subsequent pilots. Hence, the gender issue is adequately mainstreamed in the common country assessment/UNDAF guidelines and the common country assessment indicators contain sex-disaggregated parameters.

167. The theme group approach has been widely used at the country level to tackle this cross-cutting issue. Fifty-eight theme groups were operating at the field level in 1998, and in 1999 the number increased to 68. The areas where the theme groups/task forces on gender are active include advocacy, support to host Governments in legislation, technical support in capacity-building and community-level interventions. The resident coordinators' reports reveal that many workshops were held to sensitize policy makers and government officials, as well as United Nations staff, about gender issues. Training sessions, for example, were also organized for the statistics branch of recipient Governments on the concept of sex-disaggregated data and its collection and analysis. Efforts were also made to involve local NGOs in the process of national legislation and implementation of the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

168. Several agencies highlighted that community-based projects, such as projects on microfinancing and reusable resources, are usually targeted at women as part of poverty alleviation programmes. Referring to the questionnaire confirms the special attention paid to women at the project level.[17] An exemplary case is the United Nations girls' education initiative launched by the Secretary-General in April 2000. The initiative aims to mount a sustained campaign to improve the quality and availability of girls' education through a collaborative partnership of different entities within and outside the United Nations system.

169. In addition, networks of gender focal points and gender specialists also enable various United Nations agencies to take advantage of the existing expertise of gender within the system. For example, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) maintained and has sought to expand its network of regional gender advisers. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO all maintain their own network of gender focal points. However, there is a need to avoid duplication and establish a system-wide pool of gender resources and expertise.

170. Efforts have also been made in the area of training and capacity-building.[18] UNICEF and the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention prepared internal guidelines for programme officers. WFP held training workshops on gender. UNIFEM has completed a concept paper on gender mainstreaming in the common country assessment/UNDAF, which will be the basis for designing a training module at the United Nations Staff College. Yet this area is identified by

several agencies as the most challenging. In general, United Nations staff needs further training to keep a gender perspective so as to effectively collect sex-disaggregated data and generate gender-sensitive analysis. Also related is the dissemination of good practices.[19]

171. Despite the progress and achievement, it is acknowledged that the United Nations system should collaborate more closely and innovatively to explore the gender perspective of new and emerging areas, such as gender and HIV/AIDS; gender, peace and security; gender and ICT; and gender and financing for development.

Improving gender balance

172. Organizationally, an administrative instruction (ST/AI/1999/9) on special measures to recruit women has been issued with the aim of accelerating the pace of achieving gender balance in the Secretariat. The representation of women has improved at the D-1 level. The number of women at that level increased from 77 (28.4 per cent) as at 31 December 1999 to 88 (30 per cent) as at 30 November 2000 (for more information, see E/CN.6/2001/4). Similarly, the UNDG Executive Committee approved special measures to recruit women candidates for resident coordinator posts (adopted by CCPOQ in June 2000). At present, 29[20] of the 140 resident coordinators are women.

E. Regional dimensions

173. In its resolution 53/192, the General Assembly stresses the growing need to incorporate regional and subregional dimensions in United Nations operational activities, encouraging resident coordinators, in consultation with Governments, to secure greater involvement of United Nations regional commissions in the common country assessment and UNDAF.

174. The research in preparation for the triennial comprehensive policy review found some evidence of greater regional and subregional perspectives in the activities of United Nations organizations than previously, including in resident coordinator annual reports. In part, this reflects the regional aspects of globalization issues. Also, the processes related to the five-year reviews of United Nations global conferences have included attention to regional outcomes. Also, the matters raised in the Secretary-General's 1998 report on regional cooperation and the related Council resolution 1998/46 have somewhat increased the level of interest and relevant activities.

175. Consistent with the Assembly's request, the common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines adopted in 1999 included references to regional commission involvement. UNDAF familiarization training sessions in 2000 were conducted for each of the regional commissions to further stimulate participation in common country assessments and UNDAF by region. Positive results of this are beginning to be seen.

176. The ACC guidelines on regional dimensions of the work of the United Nations system were adopted in 1999. UNDP and the regional commissions also signed a strategic compact in 2000 to strengthen their policy and operational cooperation, in terms of consultations, information exchanges and joint efforts.

177. A great majority of country teams believe that regional perspectives are included in the operational activities of the United Nations system. By contrast, about 60 per cent of the country teams and several Member States declared that the United Nations regional commissions are very little involved in common country assessment and UNDAF preparations. Most agree that possible constraints preventing the effective addressing of regional dimensions in national development are insufficient funding; non-involvement of regional and subregional entities; and complications concerning national ownership of regional activities.

178. Some agencies report traditionally strong regional and subregional field structures for service delivery, for example WHO, FAO, the ILO and WFP. The work of some others is largely regional and global, such as ITU and the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Others focus considerable effort on cross-border phenomena and their implications, for instance in drug trafficking, migratory flows or the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) are examples. WFP has been taking measures for further decentralization, thereby strengthening regional and subregional offices.

179. Another concern is to strengthen the relationships with other regional and interregional organizations (e.g., the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the British Commonwealth) and encourage their greater attention to particular issues. UNICEF and WFP report efforts to accomplish this.

180. Regional commissions have also been increasingly active in engaging other entities of the United Nations system in joint or supplementary funding of certain operational activities.

181. Among the suggested steps, the following can be singled out:

(a) All resident coordinator designates should have adequate preparation in dealing with regional issues, including on the role of regional commissions;

(b) Focal points on common country assessment/UNDAF and resident coordinator issues should be established and/or strengthened in the regional commissions. Likewise, all resident coordinators should have focal points for relations with the regional commissions;

(c) Resident coordinators should ensure that all common country assessments and UNDAFs include appropriate consideration of the regional dimension, including the involvement of the regional commissions;[21]

(d) Regional commissions could become regional outposts of UNAIDS, thereby further broadening its inter-agency and multinational reach;

(e) Possibly initiate subregional or regional common country assessments and UNDAFs, aligned with regional programmes of United Nations funds, programmes regional commissions and agencies;

(f) Arrange for fuller sharing of experiences and best practices in the area of regional and subregional cooperation. This could be built into the annual regional coordination meetings.

F. Technical and economic cooperation among developing countries

182. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/192, and the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/6, both urged the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to intensify efforts to mainstream the modality of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries (TCDC/ECDC) into their operational activities. During the period under review, according to recent reports (for more information on mainstreaming TCDC, see TCDC/12/1, TCDC/12/2 and TCDC/12/3) by the UNDP Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system remained important agents for promoting and catalysing technical and economic cooperation among developing countries, within their respective areas of competence.

183. All the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system have established TCDC focal points. Many of them have formulated new policy instruments to mainstream TCDC in accordance with the revised guidelines on TCDC[22] and pilot common results indicators.[23] Some made a conscious effort to develop and support innovative and distinctive TCDC programmes to ensure sustainability and greater impact, such as the FAO Special Programme for Food Security or the International Trade Centre South-South Trade Promotion Programme. Most of the TCDC activities catalysed by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, were carried out at the subregional, regional and interregional levels. Knowledge networking and support to centres of excellence seemed to be the preferred means used by most organizations to build capacity, share best practices and expertise and conduct joint research and dialogue, to address either sectoral or broad issues of concern to a large number of developing countries, such as trade, intellectual property rights, population, postal services and HIV/AIDS.

184. UNDP remained the major provider of support to TCDC through its global, interregional, regional and country programmes. Most of its regional programmes were TCDC initiatives. The fact that over 50 per cent of the country cooperation frameworks referred to the TCDC modality indicate that TCDC has been increasingly used in UNDP programming. Furthermore, South-South cooperation was considered to be one of the priorities in the Administrator's business plan for 2000-2003.

IX. Concluding observations

185. The greatest challenge to the United Nations development system at the present juncture is to enhance its capacity to adapt and respond with agility and flexibility to a rapidly changing global environment. The United Nations cannot be an agent of change without itself changing. It cannot confront new challenges without challenging itself. The United Nations development architecture and culture has evolved over 50 years incrementally in response to specific situations and as an extension of political choices of member Governments. It has proved remarkably resilient and has much to be proud of. The altered understanding of the dynamics of development, cross-cutting global plans of action, time-bound millennium targets and intersecting mandates, however, necessitate a more collective and coordinated approach and methods of working than in the past, leading to greater synergy and

impact. The ultimate objective is to contribute to national development through integration into national processes. The changing global context and national requirements call for a more comprehensive and integrated approach.

186. To realize the full potential of the system's operational capacities, it is essential to overcome two constraints, one internal and the other external. Institutional identity promotes advocacy and issue-oriented focus and thus contributes to multidimensional development. On the other hand, excessive attachment to institutional identities and legitimacy can hamper an integrated and holistic approach. The organizations of the United Nations system should multiply their efforts to collaborate in fuller synergy and integrate their efforts to promote a common response to national development needs with joint actions and programmes. Reforms undertaken so far have covered a lot of ground in this direction, but this process needs to be extended and deepened. A more coherent and better integrated development cooperation framework should also enable the system to assist developing countries more systematically in their efforts to respond to the challenges of globalization and integrate beneficially into the world economy. However, a major constraint in this respect is the growing preference for short-term and dedicated development funding which do not only deny the critical mass of resources but also compromise the efficient use of contributed funds towards a more integrated approach. The future reform process should be directed towards addressing these twin issues.

187. Resources are necessary but not sufficient to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Their efficient use becomes more important at a time of scarcity. This calls for organizational preparedness and capacities and a cooperative culture, an inference supported by some of the impact evaluation studies. The reform of United Nations development system is meant not only to enhance internal coherence and institutional impact but even more to fulfil the broader substantive agenda and to provide better service and support to Member States. Reforms undertaken so far provide the basis for further progress. The process should move from common premises to common policy framework, from the paradigm of programming to participation, from process to content, from coordination to coherence, from information exchange to shared skills and from national execution to capacity-building. The notion of joint programming might now be taken forward to include constituencies of the country. Purpose and function should more directly define the form and process. The instrumentality of UNDAF provides the launching pad for further progress.

188. The present triennial review provides an uncommon opportunity to initiate dialogue among member Governments on the complex of issues that will define the future of United Nations development cooperation.

Notes

[1] See, for example, General Assembly resolution 55/43, para. 7.

[2] See the statement made by the Secretary-General at a UNDP high-level ministerial meeting on the future of development assistance, New York, 11 September 2000.

[3] A separate report on this topic is before the Council at its substantive session of 2001; see also E/CN.3/2001/16.

[4] The UNDP Administrator is designated by the Secretary-General to manage and fund the resident coordinator system. It is the Administrator who makes the final submission of a resident coordinator nomination to the Secretary-General.

[5] Currently, there are 130 resident coordinators.

[6] The 180-degree appraisal refers to performance feedback to the United Nations resident coordinators by the members of the country team and performance feedback to the members of the United Nations country team by the resident coordinators. It is a feedback exercise of peers and by peers.

[7] These are in addition to the existing Intranet and Internet sites of the United Nations and all ACC member organizations, as well as the CCPOQ web site, which features guidelines, sessional reports and papers and other related information; see E/2000/46/Add.1, paras. 60 and 61.

[8] As part of the ongoing reform of ACC, a new high-level committee on programme, superseding CCPOQ, and a high-level committee on management were created.

[9] A number of guidelines have been adopted by CCPOQ, such as guidelines on the functioning of the resident coordinator system (1999), a guidance note for the resident coordinator system on field-level follow-up to global conferences (1998), United Nations Development Framework guidelines (1999) and common country assessment guidelines (1998).

[10] Ghana, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Nepal and the Philippines.

[11] Madagascar and Romania.

[12] Other areas where harmonization may be feasible include contractual modalities, recruitment procedures, insurance and performance assessment methods.

[13] Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe. The number of agencies involved in harmonization efforts varies from country to country. For example, in Zimbabwe, harmonization efforts involved all United Nations agencies. In Myanmar, harmonization efforts involved UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

[14] The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has approximately 3,000 national project personnel. UNDP estimates that the number of its national project personnel may be as high as 30,000. WHO does not have a national project personnel arrangement as such, although national personnel may be contracted under arrangements that fall broadly within agreed definition.

[15] See *United Nations, Capacity-Building Supported by the United Nations: Some Evaluations and Some Lessons* (New York, 1999).

[16] It noted, in this context, the activities of United Nations funds and programmes aimed at providing technical assistance to recipient countries, in response to their national economic and social needs and priorities, including poverty eradication, promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, for achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and recent United Nations conferences, and stressed the need for these activities to be undertaken at the request of interested recipient Governments, strictly within the respective mandates of United Nations funds and programmes, which should receive increased contributions from donor countries.

[17] Some 99 per cent of the resident coordinators and 91 per cent of the recipient countries and all donors who have responded agree that United Nations activities have targeted women and girls living in poverty.

[18] WomenWatch has a dedicated section which provides information on and links on available training materials (www.col.org/GenderResources).

[19] Resources that already exist include the "good practice compendium" (www.unifem.org/goodpractices), which is an inter-agency effort, and WomenWatch (www.un.org/womenwatch), as maintained by the Division for the Advancement of Women and sponsored by several other agencies.

[20] This number includes 26 sitting women resident coordinators and three designates. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and UNFPA also have their own web sites on good practices.

[21] UNDG, in consultation with the regional commissions, is taking measures to increase progress in this area, encouraging all resident coordinators to involve regional commissions in participating in the common country assessment and UNDAF from the outset.

[22] The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1998/284, took note of the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the revised guidelines for the review of policies and procedures concerning technical cooperation among developing countries.

[23] For the pilot common results indicators, see TCDC/12/3, annex.